

Your child is being referred to Early Childhood Special Education services (ECSE) by your Early Intervention Program (EI). There are some things you will want to know.

This brochure provides information about what happens when a child involved with EI approaches age 3, and may need special education and related services from the local school district.

Early Intervention services are:

- for any family residing in Massachusetts with an infant or toddler under three years of age who has or is at risk for developmental delays.
- overseen by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
- part of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) Part C.
- developed to provide services and supports for children and families.
- described in an Individualized Family Service Plan, also called an IFSP.

Special Education services are:

- for students with disabilities ages 3 through 22 who need special education or related services.
- provided to children through local school districts.
- overseen by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- part of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) Part B.
- described in an Individualized Education Program, also called an IEP.

The Process

- EI services for your child will end on his/her 3rd birthday.
- If EI thinks your child has a disability that will affect their progress in school, with parental permission, EI will make a referral to your local school district. Parents and other professionals can also make a direct referral to EI.
- All children referred from EI for special education services must be evaluated by the local school district to determine eligibility.
- You will need to sign and return a *Consent to Evaluate* form before the school district can start any evaluations. Parents can also request evaluations by their school district.
- EI is required to begin the referral process at least **6 months** before your child’s third birthday. This is because an Individualized Education Program (IEP) from the public school district needs to be in place for an eligible student by the time they turn 3 and EI services end.
- Parents can initiate a request for an evaluation even after a child turns 3.
- The district will set up a Team Meeting, including parents, to determine eligibility for Special Education services.

- Your child will be determined eligible for special education if they have a disability, *and* if they require special education services or one or more related services because of that disability. (Examples of related services are speech, physical, and occupational therapy.)
- If your child is found eligible, the IEP Team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and identify what kinds of services are needed and where (in what setting) the services will be given.
- You are an important part of the IEP Team and it is helpful if you contribute to the discussion, for example by sharing your perspective on what your child does well, what their needs are and what supports and services might help them to build their skills.
- If your child is found eligible for special education, the services described in the IEP must begin by their 3rd birthday unless you reject the IEP services or tell the district you want a different start date.
- The IEP services may also be delayed if the Team decides that more time is needed to complete the evaluations or a later start date is appropriate.
- Immediately after the Team meeting, you will be given a summary sheet that details the types and amounts of special education and/or related services proposed by the

district, and a statement of the goal areas associate with these services.

- The Team will also decide on placement, which means the setting where the special education services will be provided to your child.
- Placement must be in what is called the least restrictive environment, or LRE. For your child, it could be the public school, a child care setting, or your home.
- When you sign the IEP that was written for your child, you may...
 - ✓ accept it,
 - ✓ reject it,
 - ✓ accept some parts and reject others.
- You may also accept or reject placement.
- You should sign the IEP and return it to the school district. No special education services can start until the district receives the signed IEP.
- Services are provided at no cost to families through your local public school system.

Visit the Autism Commission's website for a list of Parent Resources www.mass.gov/autism

Autism Support Centers

Advocates, Inc./Autism Alliance of Metrowest
(508) 652-9900

www.autismalliance.org

Autism Resource Center, Central MA
(508) 835-4278

www.autismresourcecentral.org

Community Autism Resources, Southeastern, MA
508-379-0371

www.community-autism-resources.com

Community Resources for People with Autism
Western, MA
(413) 529-2428

Northeast ARC
(978) 777-9135 x2301 or 2302
www.ne-arcautismsupportcenter.org

The Family Autism Center, Norfolk Co. &
Surrounding Areas
(781) 762-4001 x310
www.arcsouthnorfolk.org/family-autism-center.html

TILL: Autism Support Center
(781) 302-4600
www.tillinc.org/autism_training.html

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

THE AUTISM COMMISSION

CAROLYN J. KAIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Turning Three Years Old

A Brochure for Parents

*Partnering with Early Intervention and
Schools when Early Intervention (EI)
refers your child for Special Education*

The Autism Commission
(617) 624-7848